

Regional Occupational Program Information

This document is in response to the request by the Board of Supervisors for information (Meeting of October 29, 2013 Board of Supervisors) concerning the hiring processes used as well as the discipline and termination of instructors for the Regional Occupation Programs (ROP) in our county.

Background

The LACOE Regional Occupation Program (ROP) partners with 23 school districts to provide administrative and support services in professional development and curriculum. Each school district is the sole hiring agency for their own ROP instructors and counselors. LACOE has a limited role in the hiring process.

LACOE's Role

The Los Angeles County Office of Education is a state Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC) approved program sponsor for the Career Technical Education Credential. Anyone wishing to teach in a ROP classroom must obtain this credential before any of our 23 school districts can consider them for hire.

Qualifications

The qualifications for any ROP candidate depend on the specialty program that the district is interested in starting. For example, if a district is interested in an auto mechanics class, they might look for a person with auto mechanics experience in that field who may also be certified to work with various automobile companies. If the district is looking to start a culinary class, they would look for a chef that has an interest in working with students in this area. In any of these cases, each potential candidate must have an Career Technical Education credential to be qualified to teach in any of the ROP programs in our county.

Process for Hiring

Candidates who have not been previously credentialed submit application packets to our LACOE ROP office to be reviewed for credential qualifications. Included in this process, LACOE verifies that the proper forms for fingerprinting and background checks are in place and that the candidate has initiated the processes. This is signed by the agency (usually the Sherriff's Department) who administers the fingerprinting for the candidate.

The following steps describe the fingerprint and background check process:

1. The credentialing packet includes a form that the candidate completes and submits to the fingerprinting authority such as the Sherriff's Department.

2. The fingerprinting authority directly submits the fingerprints and related forms to the California Department of Justice (DOJ) and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI).
3. The candidate is required to provide LACOE a form signed by the fingerprinting authority that the fingerprints have been taken and suited for the background check.
4. The results of the background check by the DOJ and the FBI are reported directly to the CTC and the school district to which the candidate is being considered for hire. The findings by DOJ are not shared with LACOE.
5. The school district then makes the final hiring decision whether to hire the candidate.

LACOE does oversee some of its own ROP programs through our juvenile camp schools and our special education programs. LACOE does handle all of their own procedures when hiring instructors for its internal programs. That would include the recruitment, interview, credential verification, and hiring processing.

Each of our other individual school districts with ROP programs is responsible for their own recruitment and hiring processes for their ROP instructors. On occasion, LACOE is asked to assist the school district in the interview processes for candidates or in suggesting recruitment strategies. However this is done only when requested. Each district must ensure that the candidate is properly vetted and is qualified for the class in which they would be teaching.

Discipline

Each ROP teacher is an employee of the district that hires them with all the privileges and responsibilities of any employee of the district. This means that each district, including LACOE, must follow the education code, their employee contract agreements, and Board policies relative to the discipline procedures of employees. Disciplinary action can be as light as a verbal reprimand and as severe as the termination of employment. When an instructor is suspected of a violation of the law or employee contract, it is the responsibility of the district of employment to properly conduct their own investigation. If the employee's conduct involves a more serious violation of the law, the local police may also conduct their own investigation.

The education code does address some infractions that require immediate disciplinary action that may include removal from class or dismissal. Infractions that fall in this category usually involve violations of the law and the mandated reporting of the incident to the California Teacher Credentialing Committee for review. It is possible that the Commission on Teacher Credentialing could suspend the credential of the instructor suspected of being involved in violent behavior, drug abuse, or inappropriate relationships or actions against a student

if the evidence presented is substantial. It is also not unusual that an arrest and charges are filed against any instructor if there is ample evidence to build a case.

Finally, if an instructor demonstrates chronic behavior that shows no signs of improvement over time, that instructor can be disciplined more severely up to and including termination. This is usually a more involved process that would include disciplinary notices, letters of reprimand and evaluation correction plans.